

# JEEVADHARA

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## **PROBLEMS OF CELIBATE FRIENDSHIP**

**PRACTICAL PROBLEMS OF CELIBATE FRIENDSHIP**

*Felix Podimattam*

**INTIMACY AS THE GOAL OF BOTH MARRIAGE AND CELIBACY**

*Thomas Kalam*

**LOVE OF GOD: THE QUESTION ABOUT ITS SUFFICIENCY**

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# JEEVADHARA

## The Fullness of Life

PROBLEMS OF CELIBATE FRIENDSHIP

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# Editorial

Many consecrated men and women feel the need for establishing deep friendship with one another and with those who are outside consecrated celibacy. Some of them are led into friendship through close association in their apostolate. Some others develop deep love as a result of pursuing initial but innocent attractions.

All of us, as a rule, have the basic psychological need for affectionate love. We cannot erase this need nor do we need to. There is so much of ecstatic joy and fulfilment in friendship that it would be a misfortune to deny ourselves a generous portion of it. Our world is blessed with immense resources of love, care, concern and sympathy. The tragedy is that there are too few donors and receivers for them. Celibates whose mission is to witness to the love of God should be in the forefront of those who give and receive love.

The question of the various problems in celibate friendship loom, large in the lives of many contemporary celibates. On various occasions this question is raised and is often met with evasive answers. The teaching of manualistic moral theology in this regard is quite inadequate. It fails to measure up to the demands of the deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the relational potential of sexuality that we possess today. It entertains a dubious attitude to the human body and sexuality. It overstresses the disorientating potential of sexuality without giving sufficient emphasis to this relational power. Its principles do not seem to be geared towards developing the sexual dimension of man.

Some of the questions that will find a more relevant answer in this issue of *Jeevadhara* are: What should be the policy of superiors when celibates in friendship wish to visit one another just because they are friends? How often should such persons be allowed or even encouraged to communicate through letters? Is it morally all right to censure the letters of such friends? How should celibate friends conduct themselves when they happen to be together? Does the fact that consecrated celibates love God with an undivided heart mean that they cannot love their neighbour with an effective love?

# Practical Problems of Celibate Friendship

## A. Problem Arising from the Present-day Situation

### a. Difficulties Arising from the General Situation of Today

It is only the mature and productive character that is capable of true friendship. Such being the case, in any given culture, the capacity to love will depend on the influence that this culture exerts on the character of an individual. When we speak about heterosexual friendship in celibate life in the present-day world, it is good to ask ourselves whether the social structures of our times and the attitudes that spring from them are conducive to the forming of celibate friendships. It should be quite obvious to any objective observer that there are several factors which make it difficult for celibates to practise authentic heterosexual friendships today.

1) Most people have the unfortunate idea that deep communication between the sexes is impossible outside of marriage. That explains why when, for instance, a priest and a woman work together or when there is some human understanding between them, they are suspected by others. Unfortunately it is some of the so-called "good Catholics" and priests and religious themselves who are the agents of such suspicions.

2) Many people use their conscience or better their super ego not only to live in conformity with their ego ideal themselves, but to make others also to live according to the same ideal. Such people will insist most unreasonably that others too follow the principles that guide their lives. When they find that others are enjoying certain rights and privileges that they have denied themselves, they are inclined to be emotionally upset and angry and may well demand that the "deviants" be punished.

3) Many Catholics entertain childish ideas about priests and religious. Every child has an ideal concept about his father and his qualities. Very often these qualities of the father are

exaggerated and are based on the child's desires and needs. To the little child his father is one who is always available, who considers the child and his wants before everything else, and to whom he comes first. His father is the strongest and the cleverest person of all and stands head and shoulders above everyone else. Besides, his father is one who finds nothing beyond his ability, is not beset with any problems and has no emotional needs of his own.

Unfortunately, many Catholics carry this 'good father' image into their later years and project it on consecrated persons. They never realize that priests and religious are also normal men and women who have legitimate emotional needs. Through their external behaviour, some priests and religious themselves are responsible for perpetuating such highly unrealistic and childish ideas. It is high time that consecrated celibates acquired a new image as a group of human, growing, limited, professional, loving and committed individuals.

4) Some Catholics consider consecrated celibates as heroes who have renounced everything that ordinary mortals need. They are always looking for heroes with exceptional abilities and virtues. According to such people celibates who practise heterosexual friendships would in some way be compromising with the secular values of this world and thus living below their status.

5) Another group of people look upon celibates as belonging to them in a special way mainly because of their renunciation of marriage and family life. They experience a sense of loss at the very idea of heterosexual friendship in the life of consecrated celibates. They feel that heterosexual friends would come in the way of their special claims on the celibates. These friends are naturally looked upon as their rivals.

6) The confidence of some Catholics has already been sorely tried by the changes already accomplished in the Church and they are wondering what will happen next. These Catholics are shocked by the theory and practice of heterosexual friendship in celibate life. These people had all along been led to believe that the Church would never change its code and

cult. The rapid changes effected since Vatican II have shaken them up so much that they are unable to adjust themselves to a further change like the approved practice of friendship in the life of priests and religious. They think that any change is bad and that the disadvantages of change far outweigh its possible advantages.

7) We are not saying that everybody is thinking on such lines as given above. Some persons will certainly react favourably to the widening diffusion of the theory and practice of celibate friendship. They will be happy that priests and religious can at last be considered really as human beings with needs like themselves. Some will be totally unconcerned about this affair of celibate friendship. Some others will see both benefits and disadvantages in such friendships.

8) If our society were to have better ideas about celibate friendship, many of the problems in this field would disappear. If it could be made to view the reality of such friendships on a more matter-of-fact basis, most of the sufferings that celibate friends and their communities have to undergo, could be eliminated.

Theology can do much in the education of the people at large. However, theological insights will be hard to come by in such areas as that of celibate friendship where long centuries of tradition have pinned us down to set patterns of thinking and behaving. Evidently some of the traditional practices have to change before minds and hearts begin to change on a large scale.

In the meantime celibates can do a lot for the cause of friendship by making a success of their friendships. This will be possible only if they are prayerful and sufficiently mature. Seminaries and novitiates should be geared towards providing better opportunities for deeper contemplative prayer and for healthy emotional experiences that will help achieve a high level of spiritual growth and psychological maturity.

#### **b. Difficulties arising from one's community**

1) The community is the best context for the successful living of celibacy. A celibate needs to support others in their

venture of celibacy and needs to be supported by them. This support by the community implies, among other things, its readiness to accept the friendships of its members. Those in the community who do not feel the need or do not have the opportunity of forming deep friendships should be able to rejoice with their brethren who have been blessed with such friendships. They should beware of criticizing the friends out of a mistaken solicitude for their spiritual welfare.

When a man and a woman start loving each other authentically, they come closer to the mystery of the human person. In their mutual love, the mystery of each partner is revealed to the other. Moreover, genuine complementary love encourages the man and the woman to live at their best. Therefore such a love is sacred and deserves respect from others.

2) It is indeed sad that at the precise moment when a celibate is struggling to love another person in the Lord and is trying his best to integrate this love with his celibate commitment, he should often find himself either isolated or misjudged by his community. Frequently we fail to lend a helping hand to our needy brother or sister. We usually discuss on the community level about many matters such as poverty, simplicity of life, personal or communal life style, apostolate, our mission in the Church, travel, recreation, etc. We hardly ever or never discuss about the efforts to be made as a united community, in order to enable its members to become celibate lovers. Such discussions are relegated to the friends themselves. Because of this policy, the struggle for friendship is by and large, a lonely one necessitating the burying of our fears, temptations, failures and successes. The next door neighbour could help us better than even a director if he were a little more unafraid and sensitive. The ability of a community to talk openly about the topic of celibate friendship seems to have a direct bearing on the probability of its members living out successfully a loving celibacy. Consecrated celibates should be able to challenge one another to laughter and love.

If a celibate were able to feel free to bring his friend openly into the local community, it would mean that there is

nothing clandestine about that friendship. A secret relationship is often conducive to keeping friends away from their communities. The quality of the response of the local community to the friendships of its members has a great deal to do with keeping them close to or away from the group. An open friendship, namely, one that is capable of being integrated with the other members of the community, can be expected to have fewer problems. A community that does not support good friendships is complicating things for its members. There may be occasional failures here and there. These failures, however, should not be made a pretext for instilling unnecessary fear of friendship. In the case of a failure the community must be willing to confront the member directly in a spirit of concern and understanding. Stresses within the community can obstruct the working of God even if they are the outcome of the zeal for "common observance". Too tight a rein in matters of meeting and correspondence can be positively harmful.

3) Consecrated celibates who seek to form personal friendships should be prepared to face jealousy within their own communities. Jealousy exists both among men and women, but in the latter it is generally more intense. There are many reasons for such jealousy especially when the friendship is with the complementary sex. Not infrequently, jealousy appears in a pious garb as an expression of concern for the spiritual welfare of the parties involved, or of the community. Sometimes it appears under the guise of helping others to be faithful to their vow of chastity, or of safeguarding the traditions of the community. The fact that hidden jealousy is difficult to detect makes it all the more dangerous. More often than not, the motivation for disguised jealousy is a curious logic such as: "She has a friend and I don't; therefore it must be wrong."

Stories and accustions arising from the jealousy of a few members can easily lead to the psychological boycotting of the individual concerned by the rest of the community. Remarks such as this are not rare: "Well he has found a friend; it is just a matter of time." Perhaps it might be a matter of time, but the community may be largely responsible for preparing him to get out by its intolerance and obscurantism.

People who are struggling to maintain a balance in their intimate relationships are precisely those who need greater understanding and sympathy from their superiors and the other community members. It is good to remember that those who are helped to meet the challenges of friendship are apt to grow in their spirituality, in their apostolic commitment and in their love for the community.

Superiors have to be particularly sensitive and be on their guard against accusations and reports about the friendships of their subjects. Accusers must be ready to take responsibility for their allegations and be willing, if necessary, to discuss the matter over with the accused and the superior. If such a willingness is not forth coming, their accusations are to be treated as having little foundation.

4) We are not saying that celibates are never wrong in their friendships. There are sad cases of friendships going on the wrong track. But it is not out of place to ask whether in such cases of failure the difficulties encountered in the life style of the rectory, monastery or convent, have not played a significant role in producing them. Celibates who trespass the limits of moderation in this area are not seldom driven to it because of the lack of support and understanding from their communities. Ordinarily the more a priest or a brother or a sister is suspected by the community in his or her friendship, the more is he or she drawn closer to the friend. Instances are not lacking where the misunderstanding by the community drove a celibate to sexual excesses.

A bad living condition does not, of course, exonerate a celibate from his personal responsibility. What we wanted to highlight was that frequently other members of the community who show a lack of loving concern for others are in some way responsible for the wrong path that celibates take in their friendships.

5) The question of censorship of the private communication of subjects by superiors needs to be discussed here at some length. Steady and regular communication is a must for the growth and continuance of friendship. Prolonged physical separation cannot be avoided in celibate friendships. Hence

regular communication in person is ruled out. This deficiency is to be made up by regular correspondance. Unfortunately it is often difficult for friends to exchange affectionate letters on a regular basis mainly because of the possibility of their being censored by superiors.

According to the constitutions of some religious congregations the superiors are empowered to read the outgoing and incoming letters of their subjects and to decide as to whether they are to be transmitted to the persons concerned. Is the practice of censoring mail ethically defensible? It can be clearly stated that, despite any law including canon law empowering superiors to censure the mail of their subjects, it is morally wrong to do so at least in the case of professed religious and that for the following reasons.

In the first place, not anything can be made obligatory by canon law or religious constitutions and be brought under the rubric of religious obedience. Evidently whatever is in some way sinful cannot be prescribed by law. Any action that goes against human dignity or does injustice to someone is morally evil and is therefore beyond the sphere of prescription by law. Censoring of mail belonging to majors is such an action.

In the censoring of mail an injustice is done at least to the non-religious persons who write to the religious. It may be argued that no injustice is done to the religious concerned because they are supposed to have undertaken freely the restrictions on their right to correspondence. Those who argue in this way forget the fact that anything that goes against human dignity cannot legitimately be undertaken by any one. It is not lawful to renounce basic human rights and obligations. We are painfully concerned here about the injustice done to the other party. Have everyone in the world who may write to the religious forgone their right to the secrecy of private communication? Evidently not. In most cases the writers of the letters are not even aware of the existence of a law that empowers superiors to intercept their letters. The senders of the letters could not have known of the possible censorship of their correspondence because they would not have read the constitutions of the concerned congregation which are not after all available

for public circulation. They may not have been previously acquainted with knowledgeable religious who perhaps could have enlightened them on the matter of censorship. They might have taken the initiative in writing to the religious and would have been confident that the norms of conduct respected by any civilized society would most scrupulously be respected by the religious.

Moreover, when writing letters a non-religious person does so as an adult, as a free citizen and as a mentally healthy individual. If he were to find that his letters have been treated as those of a child or a prisoner or a mentally retarded person, he would naturally be puzzled and annoyed. He could well understand the legitimacy of censorship when conducted by the public authority during a national emergency or in similar situations, or by private authorities in regard to minors and those who are under training. Censorship in any other situation would rightly be regarded by him as infringing on his inalienable right to secrecy. Perhaps he would also understand if the contents of his letters were disclosed by their recipients. But the possibility of his letters being intercepted by unknown and presumably unsympathetic persons like the religious superiors would be something that is beyond his comprehension and would administer a rude shock to his ethical standards.

Secondly, as Vatican II has clearly stated, "Religious should carefully keep before their minds the fact that the Church presents Christ to believers and non-believers in a striking manner daily through them". There is no gainsaying the fact that religious life is a unique one and so it will be critically observed by non-religious persons and non-Christians. What the Church partly intends to witness to these observers is a life which "though entailing the renunciation of certain values that are to be undoubtedly esteemed does not detract from the genuine development of the human persons, but rather by its very nature is most beneficial to that development".

If the people at large were to come to know about the theory and practice of censorship as they are prevailing in some religious communities, would such a knowledge confirm or re-

fute the statement of Vatican II that religious life "does not detract from the genuine development of human persons?" Do we not correctly associate censorship of private mail with immaturity rather than with "the genuine development of human persons?" It is not only those who are either against religious life or who are ignorant of it that feel this way. Even good and conscientious religious do so. Their humility might prevent them from rebelling against the rule of censorship but their perspectiveness cannot but realize that such a rule goes counter to human dignity. Since the people of today are becoming increasingly conscious of personal dignity, it is high time that the laws empowering superiors to censor the private correspondence of their subjects be repealed.

Thirdly, postal censorship is not productive of its supposed benefits. Instead it is invariably counterproductive. The unpopular practice of censorship is strongly resented by the religious of today as can be attested to by anyone who has close dealings with religious communities. Being aware of this state of affairs some superiors have given up the practice of censoring correspondence. Others have been unwilling to do so and as a consequence complaints have been increasing by leaps and bounds. This unwillingness has also led to the widespread adoption of the strategy of secretive evasion. Very often it may be asked whether it is not just vulgar curiosity that induces superiors to open the private letters of their subjects. If so, is not the rule of censorship encouraging the morbid curiosity of some religious instead of promoting the general welfare of the religious at large?

In the fourth place, the religious have a duty of service to the people. These people should be able to approach them with dignity for help and guidance either in person, or through letters or through other means. Such a service to the people would certainly suffer if the privilege of censorship were enjoyed by religious superiors. We have been considering the important question of friendship in celibate life. How could friends write letters when the spectre of censorship was hanging over their heads?

Suppose a superior prudently suspects a communication to be containing something that can be the cause of grave harm to the community. But such instances are extremely rare and they are not to be presumed. In conclusion we can easily state that it is morally wrong for superiors to read the letters of their subjects who are not under formation.

## B. The Problem of Sexual Temptations

### a. The unavoidability of some sexual reactions

1) Sexuality being a vital part of human nature, it would be most unrealistic to expect that heterosexual friendships would be completely asexual or "purely platonic". However much a celibate might try to suppress erotic feelings and desires from his friendship with persons of the complementary sex, these will still be there all the same. Readiness to talk about these feelings to one's friend is a help towards controlling them. Those who openly admit the presence of erotic attraction in their friendships have less problems than those who deny its existence. Accepting sexual thoughts and desires as being normal in any heterosexual friendship is a wise policy. While he should beware of acting upon these desires in a manner that is incompatible with his commitment, the celibate should refrain from denying their existence or from using them as a ploy to avoid all heterosexual friendships.

2) Since body and spirit are constituent elements of a human being, we can expect their influence in every one of his experiences. Heterosexual love has, by its very nature, a tendency towards the total union of the partners. Consequently heterosexual friends should be prepared against experiencing some urges for physical union. Our sexual identity cannot but enter into the way we love one another. In human beings absolute separation between love and sexuality is impossible.

3) Since, on the one hand, supernatural realities like grace faith, vocation, etc., are beyond direct human experience and since, on the other hand, biological sexual urges are objects of direct experience, a confusion as to whether one is a good celibate is possible when one is tempted severely. The presence of strong sexual urges in no way indicates a lack of celibate

vocation. The strength of one's physical sexuality should never be the criterion for judging the relative state of one's spiritual life. Strong sexual inclinations can be counterbalanced by an equally strong will aided by grace. Perfect chastity can coexist with the severest of sexual temptations. Temptations may attack us and even obsess us, but they need not in any way harm us spiritually.

4) As a result of continued sexual temptations there can arise a tension in the celibate which may generate an urge for self-induced sexual relief. Efforts should be made to control and integrate such urges against the background of a person-centred morality which gives primary and decisive importance to one's attitudes of God centredness and other-centredness. Active connivance with erotic urges should by all means be avoided. The love for the friend or friends should be made one with one's love for God so that there is no conflict between them.

Generally speaking erotic urges tend to become relatively weaker in men with the advance of years. In women, on the contrary, the erotic urge which usually remains latent during their early youth seemingly increases upto late adulthood. There should be nothing strange, therefore, in a celibate woman's experiencing erotic feelings years after her religious profession.

5) A word is to be said about possible homosexual feelings in friendship between persons of the same sex. When such feelings do occur, an unnecessary suspicion regarding homosexuality is to be avoided. Every human being is capable of both heterosexual and homosexual feelings. It is not easy to classify certain people as heterosexual and certain others as homosexual. Most people feel more strongly for one sex than for the other. Although the majority of human beings are heterosexual and only a minority are homosexual, nevertheless homosexual feelings are not peculiar to the latter alone. Ordinarily such feelings are not to be regarded as "queer". Having greater erotic attraction for persons of the same sex than for those of the complementary sex is an indication of homosexual tendencies.

## **b. Some Practical Reflections**

1) It is not easy to discuss the issue of sexual temptations in heterosexual celibate friendships unless our attitudes towards sexuality and morality in general are frank and open. Without a better and more sensible definition of sexuality it would be difficult to guide the personal growth of individuals in this area. There is also the need to have a deeper appreciation of person centred morality as distinguished from act-centred morality.

The manualist moral theology had certain clear-cut principles for the evaluation of sexual temptations. They have lost much of their usefulness today. Today's principles are more person centred than act-centred. Not that acts are of no consequences for contemporary moral theology. Important as acts are, greater significance is accorded to personal attitudes, options and orientations towards God and towards others.

In our effort to evaluate the quality of one's celibate life, celibacy is not to be viewed merely in itself but in the context of the tenor, direction and the attitude of the person. More observance or non-observance of the traditional rules regarding sexual temptations cannot give us a clear picture of the quality of a celibate's life. Mere physical and emotional celibacy is not to be identified with spiritual and personal celibacy. Bitterness, selfishness and indifference to others are more destructive of the fundamental values of celibacy than sexual temptations. A celibate who loses the spirit of prayer fails more miserably in his celibacy than one who may fail to carry out all the stipulations regarding sexual thoughts.

Consecrated celibacy basically implies an indwelling in our heavenly Father and in our brethren, manifested mainly through contemplative prayer and community life. When we pray we dwell in God and when we love others, we dwell in them. Prayer and fraternal love are the chief signs of the gift of celibacy. The greatest offence against consecrated celibacy is the neglect of prayer and of fraternal love. A consecrated

person who is utterly available to God and to others through deep prayer and generous service is a good celibate and he need not worry a bit about sexual temptations.

2) Efforts are certainly to be made to control erotic urges. The spirit is able to control them to some extent by means of the affectivity. Affectivity has access both to the spiritual and the physical elements in man. The spirit is able to influence the affectivity directly by transmitting to it the insights of its intelligence and the inclinations of its will. Affectivity can pass this influence of the spirit to the entire organism including the physical sexuality. Left to itself, affectivity would irresistably be influenced by the action of the physical sexuality as in the case of animals. But in human beings the spirit is in a position to guide the reactions produced in the affectivity by the physical sexuality. The spirit is thus able to control the physical sexuality through the instrumentality of affectivity.

As soon as the affectivity registers the reactions of the physical sexuality, they are recognized as such. At this point there comes the intervention of the spirit. Clearly and firmly it begins to control the movements roused in the affectivity by the physical sexuality. Knowing well that the suggestions of the physical sexuality are incompatible with its celibate commitment, the spirit opposes them. Further, it brings to the mind of the celibate healthy images from its fund of previous sense knowledge, thus diverting the imagination from erotic images. The spirit, then, suggests some physical activities that can counteract the influence of the physical sexuality on the affectivity. It furthermore arouses feelings for the friend that are directed to his personal good. In this way, the spirit gradually draws the affectivity away from the influence of the physical sexuality. When the physical sexuality loses the resonances of the affectivity, it slowly calms down and peace returns to the individual. This peace is the outcome of the dominance of the spirit over the affectivity. When this strategy is employed regularly celibates will be able to meet temptations successfully.

As Aristotle and St. Thomas advise us, erotic urges are to be regulated democratically rather than tyrannically. In a

democracy, the opposition far from being suppressed, is persuaded to fall in line with the views of the majority. In a tyrannical regime the opposition is crushed by force. Repression of sexual urges is counterproductive in the sense that they will either turn violent or become absolutely passive. The right way of dealing with them is to enable them to share spontaneously in the loves of the spirit through the affectivity. The passions should be helped to become reasonable themselves. Such a reasonable control of the passions prevents them from revolt and enables them to co-operate towards constructive purposes.

3) A moderate amount of healthy exposure to sexual stimuli can be of help. In their therapy, psychiatrists employ the technique of "paradoxical intention". For instance, a person who is timid, nervous and easily upset, tries to avoid the situations which arouse anxiety. Similarly an obsessive person tries to overcome fear by fleeing from the objects and ideas he is afraid of. As a result the symptoms grow stronger instead of becoming weaker. On the contrary, if these persons could be induced to face the source of their anxiety or fear in its true form instead of running away from it, the result would be the gradual weakening and disappearance of the symptoms and liberation from their neurotic fears.

### C. The problem of the expression of love

I am dealing here with a very sensitive and delicate question with the full awareness that it is a difficult and dangerous task. My pastoral experience among consecrated celibates leaves me in no doubt that on the question of the expression of love they expect some principles and guidelines that are definite and concrete but which also leave ample room for their individual discernment and responsibility. During talks on celibate friendship, invariably the question has been asked as to how far celibates could go with regard to the expression of affection.

Friendship, being a continuous self-dedication between two incarnate spiritual beings, has to be manifested by word or action. We are asking whether external manifestations of love are permissible in celibate friendship. Should celibates love without its natural and spontaneous expressions?

For these and similar questions we can hardly give answers that are more than tentative and provisional. They are, therefore, offered here for open discussion and criticism. We only hope that they will induce others to make their positive contribution on what is a very vital yet controversial question that is rocking the celibate life today.

Seemingly, a categorical no to the question of the expression of love in celibate life would be an easy answer; but it would be neither realistic nor useful. A negative answer might sound melodious to the ears of the old but would it not be jarring to those of the young and justifiably? Avoiding legalism, on the one side, and permissiveness, on the other, I wish to follow a middle course. Legalism could serve only to tie people up in emotional knots and uncertainties and saddle them with unnecessary scruples. Permissiveness, on the other hand, would, in the long term, lead people to unfulfilment and unhappiness.

#### a. The moral aspects of the expression of love

1. *Prerequisites.* Practically speaking, we can discuss the problem of the expression of the love in celibate life only in the context of certain prerequisites. If these prerequisites are not forthcoming, expression of love would be extremely risky. Hence what we say in this section is applicable only to those who fulfil these prerequisites.

Certain fundamental truths have to be grasped as background material for making a good decision regarding bodily expression of love in celibate friendship. The spiritual condi-

tion of the parties concerned is of decisive importance in this matter. *Celibates who wish to express their love externally must be deeply prayerful, sufficiently self-disciplined and self-knowledgeable.* Even a seemingly innocent manifestation of affection could pave the way to serious abuse if one's prayer life were slack, self control unsteady, and self knowledge poor.

In the first place, celibates who wish to express their love externally should be deeply prayerful. Only a heart that is dominated by the Holy Spirit, can maintain chastity in the sphere of the bodily manifestation of love. The Holy Spirit would then guide such a heart to timely and appropriate expressions of love. The more one's heart is inflamed by the Holy Spirit, the more would it be assimilated to the heart of Christ, making its expressions of love evermore Christ-like. The prayerful celibate would let Christ love through himself. The expressions of love of such a Christ-centred celibate would be the extension of the loving and healing touch of Christ. His words and actions would reflect Christ's warmth and love. Profound contemplative communion with Christ in prayer alone could invest a celibate with Christ's loving radiance. Hence only deeply prayerful celibates could physically express their love with Jesus' healing and loving touch. *I feel that a celibate who does not devote at least half an hour daily to contemplative prayer should not go in for bodily expression of love.*

The consecrated celibate should be deeply mindful of the state of life that he and his friend have chosen. The vividness of their commitment to Christ should never be allowed to fade. They could express tenderness without anxiety and qualms. The lively awareness of their special commitment to God would keep them back from setting their foot on the marital domain.

The second prerequisite is sufficient sexual maturity, born of self-discipline and control. In the absence of self-discipline a celibate would be unable to express his love

chastely. Cross is what crowns celibate expressions of love. Over and above the necessary pains and privations of life, cross entails checks on the imagination and emotions.

Discipline is the forerunner of achievement. Handle any tool contrary to prescriptions and disaster is inevitable. Discipline is the order we put into our life and actions for the achievement of our goals. It implies an understanding of our inclinations and the willingness to control them reasonably. Friendship needs to be purified by discipline. Sexual maturity flows from a disciplined life. *A celibate who is not living a reasonably mortified life has no qualification for the physical expression of love.*

It may be asked whether a disciplined celibate would not abstain from all physical expressions of love. Such a celibate would certainly abstain from all unlawful expressions but not necessarily from all lawful ones. Reasonable expressions of love, being manifestations of the virtue of charity, are acts of self discipline. We would not call a mother disciplined, were she to refrain from all expressions of love for her child. No expression that is demanded by authentic love goes against the virtue of self control. On the contrary, abstaining from expressions that are required by genuine love, would go counter to true self-discipline. Self discipline implies the renunciation of everything that comes in the way of true love and its manifestations. Love and its prudent manifestations are not to be renounced under the ploy of self discipline. Love is the supreme value and everything else is to be renounced in its favour.

It is customary to equate physical expressions of love with lack of self-discipline. The body is a part of man. Several misconstrued thought-systems have cast aspersions of shame and disgrace on the human body. Casting off unwise angelism, we should educate ourselves to accepting our body. Frequent shudder at our own body would build up a highstrung life that would dehumanize us. If we were to shed exaggerated fears about our body and take it on its stride, we would have been able to build up a more colourful existence. When freed from fancied darkness, our body has the capacity to sublimate our

emotions. A realistic and positive attitude towards our body is apt to enhance the joy of living.

The third prerequisite is the deep awareness of the risks that are involved in the expression of love. The sex impulse can be explosive. The tale of miseries caused by uncontrolled sex is shocking. Unbridled sex has ruined not only individuals but also families and even nations. Although external marks of affection need not always be selfish gestures, they can easily serve as appetizers to further and deeper physical contact. With the natural inclination not to retreat, but to go ahead, physical expressions of affection can pave the way to abuse, wherein the other person is made an instrument of one's selfish pleasure. The possibility of risks, however, should not make celibates cold towards their friends nor fearful of prudent expressions of love. Sufficient prayerfulness, sexual maturity and self knowledge are a guarantee against possible abuses.

A person who is prayerful, self controlled and self knowledgeable is said to possess the right affective orientation or, to use a scholastic terminology, the right disposition. The right disposition would indicate the correct path to be followed in the matter of the expression of love. If we were to commit ourselves to the right goals, we would intuitively perceive the correct means to attain them. Theologians might need an arduous reasoning process to discover what is chaste in a situation, but a chaste person would not need such a process. He would perceive what is chaste instinctively and immediately. If a situation were to become confusing even to the chaste person and expert advice were needed, the chaste person would follow that solution which would agree with his "sense" of chastity.

It is possible for our wishes and aversions to achieve such a steady agreement with the objects of reason that an objective demand for assent may be expressed by a positive inclination, and an objective demand for negation by a feeling of repugnance. It is possible for our heart and will to be in such a steady agreement with the object of virtue that our inclina-

tions and aversions are no longer exposed to the arbitrariness of subjectivism, but assumes the reliable power of an object. A judgment determined by a virtuous inclination is necessarily in agreement with virtue. If a person is known for his, unflinching dedication to justice, for instance, we know that his example can safely be followed in difficult problems regarding justice. We are sure that the instincts of people whom we know to be really virtuous cannot be at variance with what virtue demands. Clearly there exists a harmony, a sympathy, a dynamic unity, a community of nature, in short a connaturality between the virtuous heart and the requirements of virtue. When justice demands that a proposal be answered in the negative, the heart of the just man cannot fail to elicit an act of aversion. Similarly when chastity requires that an action be omitted, a chaste heart cannot but omit it.<sup>1</sup>

Moral life, understood in this way, does not lead to moral subjectivism. The subjectivity of virtuous people is based on the subjectivity of God, which is objectivity itself. Because there exists some subjectivistic transitory states in man, we cannot overlook the tremendous objective value of the dictates of the hearts of virtuous people.

Precisely because correct moral perception and correct moral willing are dependent on a good heart, namely, a heart set on God and divine things, we are demanding intimate relationship with God in contemplative prayer as a prerequisite for the chaste expression of love. Celibates who are serious about their personal prayer can be expected to discern intuitively the correct conduct in their deep emotional relationships. If we dedicate ourselves to be fit for the acceptance of God, we shall consciously intend to love in such a way that our words and deeds are worthy of Him. If we frequently offer our mind and heart to Him in contemplative prayer, we shall be renewed in our self understanding as those who depend upon Him, and those who seek to be consistent with what He gives and requires of us. This situation is parallel in structure to the self-understanding of others who have offered themselves to other objects

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1. Felix Podimattam, *Relativity of the Natural Law*, Bangalore, 1976, pp. 71-73.

of commitment. The devotee, for instance, of the "playboy" way of life would be having a self understanding that is determined by his devotion to that way of life. He would endeavour to live in a way that is consistent with his self understanding which is evoked and directed by his "playboy" mentality. Virtuous persons have a particular stance or perspective. They stand in a particular relationship to God, which in turn affects their self understanding, their perception and interpretation of the world. They have certain internal norms by which they discern what is right and good. Deep-rooted commitment to God in contemplative prayer orientates our hearts to God and induces us to posit correct actions.

## 2. *The Legitimacy of prudent and appropriate expressions of love*

1) A love that is not expressed externally cannot be called real. Love has to find expression in natural and spontaneous ways. Physical contacts can be a means of self-expression and personal communication. True love needs to be expressed externally. Celibate friendship far from being a disembodied relationship, relates two human persons at all levels of human existence, the physical not excluded. A love that is completely devoid of external expression would not be human. True human love wells up in the spirit and manifests itself externally through the body. Human friendship promotes the spiritual in man with the aid of his body.

Exterior expressions of love have a vital role to play in human growth and development. They could be an affirmation of intimacy and appreciation. They could be assurances of mutual respect and concern between friends. They could mean participation in the other's joy or sharing in his sorrow. The context would indicate the meaning of these actions. A respectful and loving touch, for instance, often conveys more than what a torrent of words can.

Hence characterizing all bodily expressions of love outside of marriage as "proximate occasions of mortal sin" would be tantamount to ignoring the communicative and personal value of human touch. The experience of touch used to be

depicted in prohibitive and dark colours. This is not to say that touching is the only or the best means of communication everywhere and for everyone always. What is meant is that reasonable bodily expressions of affection are often necessary and useful. We are also not saying that touching is not dangerous. Touching contains latent dangers that can change the bright rays of love into dark clouds of passion. Misjudgment is most common in the area of tactile expressions of affection. The effects of sin have made control more difficult for the sense of touch than for the other senses.

2) Friendship is a self-gift. Before giving our self as a gift to others we have to accept it. He who is uncertain about his own lovableness would not be in a position to offer himself to others in love. A genuine assessment of oneself as lovable and important presupposes the appreciation and love of others. The awareness of being wanted provides elan to one's life.

A good self-image requires also a joyful acceptance of one's body. In the absence of such an acceptance, the offering of oneself in mature love becomes very difficult. Innocent bodily expressions of love help a person to accept his body.

3) Self-expression is a necessity for all living, the spiritual included. It makes us more aware of ourselves, by clarifying our tendencies, ideas and ideals. A person who does not express himself externally can be expected to be a messed up entity, full of confusion, misgivings and even guilt. On the contrary, he who expresses himself externally would be able to overcome his negative feelings more easily. We cannot expect anyone to share with us in our joys and sorrows unless we are willing to give expression to them. No support would be forthcoming if we were to fail to make others aware of our needs externally. Reactions of others to our self-expression are another positive factor that contributes to our betterment.

4) Many people are wary about their bodies and those of others. To them the body seems to be a dangerous obstacle to the spiritual world. The influence of dualism and spiritualism is visible here. Under the impact of Greek dualism between

soul and body, many Christian thinkers drifted into spiritualistic tendencies that viewed the soul as something that is incaged in the body. Spiritualism sought to free the spirit from this bondage to enable it to soar high into the supernatural realm. Evidently, for dualism and spiritualism, the body and its activities were anything but good.

The body and the spirit are partners in man. Every human being is both body and spirit at the same time. Human life and activity are the outcome of the concurrence of the operations of the body and the spirit. There is no room for bifurcation in man between the body and the spirit. When a decision is made by the spirit, it is executed through the faculties of the body. Every decision in the sacred sanctuary of the human heart naturally and necessarily finds expression in concrete action in the physical world through the medium of the body. Both the internal and the external actions co-operate towards mutual flourish and finish. Thus the principle of the interiority only is a myth with dangerous consequences. A balance between the interior and the exterior alone would make for a truly human and integrated personality.

The Bible sees man as a body-spirit whole. St. Paul is not referring to an opposition between the body and the soul when he contrasts the flesh with the spirit. He is contrasting the sinful man with the man who is guided by the Spirit of God. Psychologists remind us that our body-image as a part of our total self-image contributes towards it. Even a simple thing as the losing of hair or teeth can affect our self-image seriously. One-eyed persons feel a deep sense of inadequacy because they sense that they are not whole personalities. Contrarywise, a better body-image deriving from, say, a good shave or a new attire, can boost up one's self-image.

Thus the role of the body in human relationships is not to be minimized. A human being is a psychophysical individual whose body is his self, although not his entire self. Our body enables us to be present with others and to act for others. It is the main instrument with which we love and manifest our love. Persons have to meet one another through their bodies in order to achieve a union of souls. Full communication between persons is impossible without physical co presence.

Long-distance and indirect communications can never be compared to face-to face meeting. Writing or telephoning to a person is a poor substitute for being physically present to him. For the full co-presence of persons, there must be bodily presence. The human body constitutes an essential element of human relationship.

5) Many authorities uphold the legitimacy of the bodily expression of love in celibate friendship. Father Paul Conner writes: "We oughtnot to believe that the state of virginity implies a radical incapacity for physical love. This would mean the reserving of virginity for incomplete and feeble persons. The truth is quite the opposite: there can be no virtuous virginity without love, and human affection, in its most sublime manifestations, makes use of the humble physiological substratum of the human composite without which it would have neither this ardour nor this power which we discover in truly great souls".<sup>2</sup>

Father Fergal O'Connor has the following to say: "We must remember that the person is both body and soul and that what I am loving is either a man or a woman not just a soul or a mind. In a very real sense, human love needs to express itself in a bodily way. We see this very clearly in the relationships between parents and their children, particularly in the relationship between a mother and her baby. To put it in more theoretical terms we can say that the language of human love is partly a bodily language. It is through bodily actions that we foster, cultivate and develop any form of love for others, even God. The liturgy is a concrete proof of this".<sup>3</sup>

Father Simon Tugwell observes: "If celibacy is to be a convincing witness to our deliverance from the tyranny of idols, it must at the same time bear witness to a fully human mode of life which does not need or fear idols. As long as the celibate is on the run from sexuality, he or she is still effectively, offering it worship. He must be undaunted by it, willing

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2. Paul Conner, *Celibate Love*, Huntington, Ind., 1979, pp. 134-135.

3. Fergal O'Connor, "Sexuality, Chastity and Celibacy", in: *Celibacy and Virginity*, Dublin, 1968, p. 39.

to form rich human relationships without fear of affection, without fear of bodiliness, without fear even of those things which, in our culture, are almost automatically associated with concubinage, such as kissing, holding hands, all of which feature at times, in the Christian traditions of celibacy".<sup>4</sup>

Teilhard de Chardin provides a fresh interpretation of celibacy against the background of the insight that physical contact has a relevance that goes far beyond marriage and procreation. Even as he maintains that every physical expression of love is not permitted to the celibates, he exhorts them not to deny themselves legitimate bodily expressions of love.<sup>5</sup>

St. Teresa of Avila wrote a remarkable letter to Father Jerome Gracian, in 1576, a little more than a year after they had first met: "For many reasons it is permissible for me to feel great affection for you and to show it in the dealings we have together."<sup>6</sup> For the saint sensible love can lead our fellowmen to God. She writes in the *Way of Perfection*: "Neither with your relatives nor with anyone else must you use such phrase as 'If you love me', or 'Don't you love me?' unless you have in view some noble end and the profit of the person to whom you are speaking. It may be necessary, in order to get a relative - a brother or some such person - to listen to the truth and accept it, to prepare him for it by using such phrases and showing him signs of love, which are always pleasing to the senses."

### 3. Some moral guidelines

1) Tabulating the do's and don'ts with regard to the question of bodily expression of love in celibate life is not an easy task. Many dimensions of sexuality from a psychological, sociological, philosophical and theological point of view, lie beyond the scan of the scientific telescope. Human life itself is

4. Simon Tugwell, "Celibacy", *The Furrow*, 28(1977)p. 344

5. Cf. Robert Springer, "Notes on Moral Theology", *Theological Studies*, 32 (1971) p. 482.

6. Rohrbach, P. T., *Journey to Carith*, New York, 1966, p. 182.

a semidiscovered land with vast expanses that are yet to be explored. So we should be prepared to travel on some unbeaten paths when we try to explore the moral aspects of celibate expression of friendship. According to Vatican II, we form part of a pilgrim Church and are on our way. The doubts and uncertainties of the past accompany us. Neither academic degrees, nor spiritual wisdom, nor even mystical knowledge can clear all our doubts.

No action stands out of its context. Every action is unique inasmuch as it is the outcome of several factors in and around the person who posits it. No two friends are the same. While one wants expressive affection, another craves for silent regard. One shys away from physical expression of love, whereas another does not understand any affection that is not expressed externally. Touch inflames one, while it chills another. Some friends have the blessing of proximity and easy accessibility while some others are out off by distance or other factors. Some live in loving and appreciative surroundings, while others are condemned to a tolerated co existence. A thousand and one circumstances such as these render the situations of individuals so very different. A person may change almost irrecognizably because of circumstances. A code of conduct for the expression of love in all circumstances and situations would be almost impossible.

2) Moral rules regarding the manifestation of affection were cut and dry in the legalistic morality. Concerning itself with sin, such a morality pointed out sin and proposed moral barriers to it. Sinfulness fixed the borderlines in the area of the expression of love. The only concern of such a morality was to keep people away from sin. This approach served only to orphan love of its human qualities. Immediate results might have ensued from this sin-centred morality, but they could hardly sustain the virtue of chastity for long.

Of course, we should not overlook the point of no return in sexual matters. The mighty power of the sex impulse would call for some reasonable barricades. What we are against is a sin-oriented approach. A better approach would be that of helping people to develop their sexual personality through

positive enlightenment and guidance. The burden of decision as to what is appropriate or inappropriate should finally rest on the responsible decision of the individuals. Our endeavour should be to provide guidelines that would help them to arrive at this decision

3) Celibacy is to be judged morally according to its potential to enable persons to enter into a mature relationship with God and others. Sincere love for God and for others reveals the true nature of celibacy. Celibacy is a dedication to greater love for God and man rather than a mere power for controlling sexuality. Celibate chastity, far from being a downright denial of sexuality, implies a wise use of it in the service of authentic love. It directs one's sex potential towards a richer and more love-filled life. The basic moral question in celibacy is whether or not it helps a person to develop his potential for authentic love.

Undoubtedly, we have to give greater importance than before to the quality of the relationship of the friends between God and themselves and between each other, before assessing the morality of their expression of love. Some friends are intensely prayerful, have deep love and respect for each other and work for their mutual total good. Some others are slack in their prayer life and try to use each other for their selfish satisfaction.

4) The accent on personal responsibility and person-centred morality in determining the moral aspects of the expression of love in celibate life does not in any way mean the denial of the existence or the need of relevant ethical principles and guidelines in this regard. Some of the more important guidelines are listed below.

In the first place, genuine love and concern for each other must be present. Sexuality at all levels, at the generic as well as at the genital, is something noble and sacred. Sexuality at the generic level is involved in the celibate expression of love. Sexuality is a mystery of love and interpersonal relationship. It should, therefore, be employed only at the service of authentic love. Using it for any other purpose is to abuse it. A supposed expression of affection without

a corresponding interpersonal relationship to sustain its significance would be nothing but a lie in action. Any expression that is not the external articulation of genuine internal love is unchaste.

It is not easy to be objective with regard to the genuineness of one's love for a sexually appealing person. One can easily be deceived in the area of sexual attraction. Here rationalizations of one's impetuous desires can readily pose as convincing arguments. Many people take the experience of sex-appeal and need relationship for authentic love, because their psychological contents are alike. The psychological experience of sex-appeal is similar to that of real love. Since in both the instances, there is mutual interest and some kind of infatuation confusion between sex appeal and love is quite understandable.

In the second place, directly willed genital pleasure is to be always ruled out from the celibate expression of love. I would distinguish three kinds of pleasure, namely, sensible pleasure, genitally-related pleasure and genital pleasure. Any pleasure that is experienced during the exercise of the sense organs other than that of the sexual organs is sensible pleasure. We have the example of the pleasure one derives from the sight of a glorious sunset or from hearing an elevating melody. Such a pleasure does not normally have an impact on the sexual organs.

On the other side of the pleasure-spectrum, we have genital pleasure which is specific to the sexual organs and is experienced when these organs are aroused. In between these two categories of pleasure, there is the genitally-related pleasure. Sensible enjoyment which has direct impact on the sexual organs is what we understand by genitally-related pleasure. Though it is more than merely sensible pleasure, it is not strictly genital pleasure either. It includes elements from both the sensible and the genital pleasure. The thrill, for instance, from a splendid dawn is sensible pleasure. But it comes nowhere near the pleasure that one experiences at the attractive smile of a sweet friend. May be, there is some kind of slight impact on the sexual organs, but the pleasure is not con-

centrated on these organs as it is in the case of genital pleasure. So long as one purposefully controls this spontaneous beginning of arousal, it is bound to be transitory.

Another important distinction is between directly and indirectly willed genital pleasure. Genital pleasure is directly willed when it is pursued purposely by indulging in genitally arousing fantasies or actions or when it is consented to on being aroused by other actions. Genital pleasure is indirectly willed when it is not sought for in itself nor consented to when it arises, but is merely tolerated as a side-effect of an otherwise legitimate fantasy or action. Genital pleasure might result from certain odd duties which are not performed for its sake. Thus a physician might be genitally aroused on examining a patient, or another person making a needful study of the physiological aspects of sexuality might have the same experience. In such and similar cases, genital pleasure is not willed directly.

As we noted earlier, directly willed genital pleasure as such is evil because it has the terrific potential for harm if it is not regulated. The power of the urge for genital pleasure to harm others should be evident to all who read papers. Many crimes under the sun have this urge for their cause. Fights, retaliations, murders, injustices, etc., are the outspillings of this blind passion. It has wrecked individuals, families and even entire societies. A society that fails to fence the boundaries of this urge cannot expect to enjoy peace. Direct willing of genital pleasure with another person outside the context of a committed love in marriage, seems to be tantamount to using that person as means to selfish enjoyment.

The authentic tradition of the Church makes it clear that continence is at the root of consecrated celibacy excluding all directly willed genital pleasure. Therefore celibate love should in no way trespass into the domain of genital love nor concur with attitudes and expressions that proximately lead to the consummation of genital sexuality. Genital love in celibacy vitiates friendships and destroys the quality of celibate commitment.

In the third place, genital pleasure can occur sometimes even when it is not sought for. One need not refrain from common expressions of authentic love even though they might occasion genital pleasure. No man is a master of all his physical reactions emotions and tendencies. The occurrence of genital pleasure as a side-effect of common and normal expression of love is to be considered as indirectly willed. Human actions sometimes outreach their intended goals and produce some unintended effects. The policy of keeping away from normal contacts with people and from common expressions of love because of the fear of genital pleasure, would be unrealistic and unwarranted.

Thus sensible pleasure and genitally-related pleasure are not incompatible with consecrated celibacy. Genitally-related pleasure should not be confused with genital pleasure. Normal contacts with people can be expected to produce occasional excitements. Daily life with all its outgoings and incomings, endearments and friendly associations, may arouse some genitally related pleasure occasionally, but such a pleasure can easily be controlled by prayerful and mature celibates.

#### **b) The pastoral aspects of the expression of love**

1) Celibate friends, human as they are, should be welcome to express their love for each other in legitimate and appropriate ways. Such expressions would only serve to enhance their friendship. Obviously, their focus in their endearments should be different from that of the married couples. The celibate, dedicated as he is to God, cannot make a total and exclusive surrender of himself to another human being in love. His commitment to another should not detract from his special dedication to God. Married friendship and celibate friendship are camps pitched miles apart.

Every external manifestation of love, even legitimate ones, has the tendency to arouse sexual urge in the persons concerned. Celibates should be careful to keep at bay such urges. The spirit of continence should enable them to control their emotions and employ them reasonably at the service of love. Their regard for their friends should deter them from any improper expression of affection.

Authentic love would safeguard the friends from self-destructive relationships. Genuine complementary love would

take possession of the partners in friendship and bring their urges and inclinations under its sway. Thus their true love would check and control their drives. The strength of their dedication to God and the conviction about the nobility of their complementary love would help them to keep the sexual urge under control.

2) True liberty has no truck with licence. True freedom is always circumscribed and restricted one. In genuine love two individual freedoms concur in mutual esteem and respect. One freedom will have to set aside its marvellous sentiments, plans and schemes in deference to the choice of the other.

The freedom of the children of God thrives on proper checks and controls. Reasonable restraint should hold the reins of one's affective expressions. All propensity towards mere eroticism should be avoided. A relationship that is obsessed with the erotic cannot expect to be chaste. Frequent kissing by dedicated friends is not a healthy indication. Soft-styled funs and frolics have to be strictly kept within the bounds of propriety. Exaggerated fondness for caressing reveals weak supernatural foundations. Unreasonably long chit-chatting and day dreaming show that there is little place for the Holy Spirit in the relationship. "Just for once" is a dangerous proposal in the matter of the expression of love in celibate life.

A man who allows himself too much freedom with a woman is already enslaved. A woman who listlessly fiddles with a man's emotions has set a trap for herself. Many a celibate, overconfident about himself / herself has been rash in such matters and has, before long, precipitated into danger. He / She found restrictions to be impossible at a later stage. The expression of love in celibate friendships has a risky, steep and precipitous road to travel. Many a grave has been dug for celibacy along this winding path. The spate of desertions from the celibate rank should persuade celibates to be watchful.

A celibate friendship could thrive only under strict vigilance. Every manifestation of affection that pricks one's conscience should call for serious reconsideration. If a token of affection were to raise road blocks on the Godward journey, one would have to bid it farewell. Celibate friendships have better chances of growth when some distance is maintained with regard to meeting and sharing. Infrequent meetings supported by regular correspondence, seem to be more conducive to the development of celibate love than too frequent

meetings. A certain amount of physical separation and bodily absence is essential for a healthy celibate friendship. The ability to say to the Lord the following or similar prayer sometimes is a good sign: "Lord, this time, we renounce the joy of meeting or that of expressing our love for your sake so that you and we will know who it is we really love above everything else."

3) Celibacy is to be understood dynamically. It is never a fully accomplished fact. Far from being a fully given fact, it is a continual striving. All maturing, whether celibate or married, is a lifetime task, and is never achieved within a predetermined time. No time limit can be set for the celibate to soar up to the summit of celibacy.

Celibacy is not to be regarded as a prefabricated structure. Neither ordination nor profession could by themselves infuse celibacy into any one. Celibacy has to be learned gradually and patiently, for it is a life-time project.

Assessment of morality in celibacy should certainly be against the background of sound moral ideals. Yet it should not be forgotten that, in this sinful world, every ideal remains something to be attained. No one can wear this mitre of perfect virtue. We must take people as they are and work with what they are. We should be alive to the good that they have accomplished and challenge them to better accomplishments. If they are sincerely striving after the ideal they are following the imperatives of the same ideal.

### Conclusion

In a pluralistic and sceptic world such as ours, the only witness to the kingdom of God that is intelligible to the modern man is a life that is more rather than less human, namely, a life that is inspired by love. Loving is a risky affair. But not loving is more risky.

It is worth repeating that ardent longing and search for God in solitude and contemplative prayer is an indispensable condition for the cultivation and expression of celibate friendship. The celibate should strive to acquire familiarity with God in prayer. Such a familiarity would provide real depth and authenticity to his familiarity with men. He would be able to love them as Christ loves them.

# Intimacy as the Goal of both Marriage and Celibacy

When a gardener sows a seed in the ground, he wants to see it sprouting and growing up as a healthy plant producing beautiful blossoms or fruits. When God creates us, it can reasonably be concluded, so that we grow up like 'human beings' and glorify him. For, as St. Irenaeus says, his glory is a human being "who is fully human and fully alive". But it seems that some people decide to please God, the supreme Gardener, by refusing to be fully human. It has been customary to hear the vow of celibacy being interpreted as an act of 'sacrifice' whereby an individual decides to give up the 'human' fulfilment from the sexual point of view in order to 'please' God. Of course there are other macabre interpretations of this vow like the one I heard recently. According to this thinking the Canaanites of old used to sacrifice their infants to please their God Moloch. Today since the child sacrifice is forbidden, the celibates are doing the same homage to their God by 'sacrificing' the children who could have been born if they were married! The idea that God is 'blood thirsty' and sadistic seems to be still alive and well even two thousand years after Jesus' attempt to reveal Him as a loving and kind Father. Even those who see the vow of celibacy as a means of 'fulfilment', consider this fulfilment as taking place in 'heaven' or on purely 'spiritual' level. In short they liken the celibates to 'the angels in heaven', meaning that they have superseded or transcended their sexuality here on earth.

No wonder why many a psychologist doubts seriously if celibacy and mental life can go together. They fail to understand how people who are sexual through and through, can live as if they are asexual — and still lead a 'healthy' normal life.

The idea that through the vow of celibacy one is curtailing one's human growth seems to be contradicting the biblical

idea of following Christ, of which the religious life is but a special form. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul says:

“Have this mind among yourselves,  
which is yours in Christ Jesus,  
who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not count equality with God  
a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself,  
taking the form of a servant  
being born in the likeness of men” (Phili 2:5-7).

Jesus’ self-emptying (*kenosis*), which is the model recommended by Paul to Christians, whether they are celibates or not, shows that in order to ‘empty’ oneself, one has to try to reach fullness first. The fullness of divinity was in Jesus. He was equal with God. He, however, did not want to cling to this equality – but ‘emptied’ himself.

The celibates who dedicate their lives for the Kingdom of God are also supposed to be following this example of *kenosis*. But before you can empty, you have to be full. Only to the degree that you are full can you empty yourself. The fullness required of the celibates is not that of divinity, as in the case of the Son of God, but that of humanity. How can they grow in the fullness of their humanity if they discard their sexuality, which is the core of their personality? Whether we are celibates or not, every cell of our being is sexual, in the sense we are either male or female. A development which discards one’s sexuality is a pseudo-development.

The root cause of the crisis that is experienced by many celibate today is this sense of incompleteness or hopelessness regarding the attainment of human fullness. For they rightly feel that in a life where sexuality is not integrated but discarded or suppressed, they cannot develop into mature human beings. Therefore until the celibates are convinced that they can attain fulfilment – fullness of humanity – through their vow of celibacy, and offer it at the service of their brethren after the example of their Master, this crisis is only going to worsen.

On the other hand it is assumed that the state of marriage leads people who enter it 'automatically' to the human fulfilment. The pre-supposition here seems to be that if human beings grow up 'naturally' and, when they are physically and sexually mature, enter into genital relations with a person of the other sex they would attain the fullness of humanity. Here human fulfilment is equated with a biological process. This equation needs a close scrutiny. The question is : Is the ability to achieve sexual orgasm the goal of human sexual development ?

The popular idea that the goal and culmination of sexual development is genital intercourse received 'scientific' support from the patriarch of modern psychology, Sigmund Freud : . "The turning point of this [sexual] development is the subordination of all the component sexual instincts under the primacy of the genitals and along with this the subjection of sexuality to the reproductive function."<sup>1</sup> Here Freud's view clearly is that the goal of sexual development is genital contact between man and woman with a view of procreation. Strangely enough, Freud on whom the ecclesiastical Magisterium and the theologians looked with great suspicion and even with aversion for his 'pan sexualism', was their bed fellow in this "procreation centred" view of sexuality. Once an individual has developed the ability for genital sexual expressions, any other form of sexual expression was viewed by Freud as 'perverse'. Before the attainment of sexual maturity, these 'other' forms of sexuality had a role : in the absence of the real goal, it enabled the developing sexual energy to be diverted to some other areas or persons. For example, a child's 'attraction' to its mother, according to Freud, is a form of 'aim-inhibited' sexuality. When incest, taboos etc. prevented the child from expressing sexual attraction overtly, this was transformed into a sort of 'love' for the mother :

The social instincts belong to a class of instinctual impulses which need not be

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1. S. Freud, "The Development of the Libido and the sexual Organization", in the *The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* New York, Norton 1966, p. 328.

described as sublimated, though they are closely related to these. They have not abandoned their directly sexual aims, but they are held back by internal resistances from attaining them; they rest content with certain approximations to satisfaction and for that very reason lead to especially firm and permanent attachments between human beings. To this class in particular belong the affectionate relations between parents and children.....<sup>2</sup>

This view of Freud was almost unanimously rejected by his followers in the world of psychoanalysis itself. They refused to accept 'genital intercourse' as the sole and supreme aim of psycho-sexual development. According to Jung, the apex of this development is attained not by the onset of puberty, but in one's early 40's, and it consisted in cultural interests. For Adler this aim was "striving for superiority over the self". For Maslow it is "self-actualization" and for Erikson "the development of intimacy and ego-integrity". On the whole all these views point in the direction that the goal of the psycho-sexual development is "socialization": man's ability to establish friendship with other human beings.

The blunder that Freud committed when he identified genital sex with the goal of psycho-sexual development is evident. As we have already seen Freud considers any form of attachment between people other than those aimed at genital relations to be "aim-inhibited" sexual expressions. The contradiction of this view is self-evident. As Maslow says this means that "if sex were never inhibited, and if everyone could couple with everyone else, then there would be no tender love. Incest taboos and repression - these are what breed love, according to Freud".<sup>3</sup> It is indeed our experience that married

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2. S. Freud, "The Libido Theory", in *Collected Papers*, Vol. 5, New York Basic Books, 1959, p. 134.

3. A. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, New York, Harper Row, 1970, p. 191

people who engage in sexual relations are capable of loving each other tenderly. In fact in a healthy marriage this tender love is seen to increase as a result of the genital contacts, and this closeness remains and flourishes beyond the stage of the ability for genital relations. Man, unlike other animals, is not sad after coitus.

Though Freud unjustifiably argued for genital supremacy, he made a useful contribution to the understanding of human sexuality. It was he who first distinguished between two aspects of human sexuality. Until the time of Freud human sexuality was identified with those aspects of a person's sexual life which appear around puberty which eventually lead one to genital union with a person of the other sex. But Freud created a Copernican revolution in this view. Before the time of Freud, people would have found it amusing to speak about the 'sexual life' of a three year old child. But Freud has been able to trace the development of human sexuality right to its origin. Here he was not identifying sexuality with the physical aspects of genital sex, but with the psychic energy, which is the underlying force in sexual development. Thus he maintained that the libido or sexual life energy is present in a person right from birth. A person's basic development takes place when the individual channels this energy first in different parts of the body and then gradually to other persons. Thus in the early stages the libido is centred around the 'oral' area. The neonate can be said to interact with his environment mainly by 'mouthing' the world. His liking and disliking is dependent on how much something or someone is pleasing to his mouth. Then toward the end of the first year, as the parents turn their attention to toilet training, a lot of this energy (libido) is channelled towards the anal area. Freud calls it the anal stage. Later on the same libido is directed toward the genital area and the child discovers what it means to be a boy or a girl (the phallie stage). So far the libido was mainly centred around the different parts of one's own body. The same libido is held responsible for the child's attention turning to others: first to the peer group, almost exclusively to those of one's own sex (the latency period), then gradually with the on-set of puberty to people of the other sex (genital stage).

Thus by attributing the sexual development to the channelling of the libido and tracing its development right back to the birth of an individual, Freud has been able to distinguish between two currents in human sexuality: the affective current sexual energy, which is present in its affective form right from birth, is held responsible for the different forms of love and affection that individual exhibits. It is "the totality of affection, friendship and tenderness in life".<sup>4</sup> The genital current which appears when the individual becomes physically mature and genitally capable, deals with the sexual tension reduction and procreative aspects of the sex. It was not in distinguishing between these two aspects of the human sexuality that Freud made a mistake, but in holding the view that one current - the genital - is supreme and perhaps the only valid form of sexual development, and in maintaining that affective current is a form of 'aim-inhibited' sex.

As we have seen this view was rejected almost unanimously by the post-Freudian psychoanalysts. They have painted out that sexuality has not only a biological goal, but also a social one. An individual's psycho-sexual growth does not terminate or culminate with the genital stage, but on the contrary it goes beyond it to the social aspect. In fact psychologists like Erikson maintain that the aim of our psycho-sexual development is the attainment of intimacy and integrity, and that genital sex has meaning only within the context of this striving for intimacy and integrity.<sup>5</sup>

It is within this context that one should speak about the sexual fulfillment of a celibate. The goal and culmination of the psycho-sexual development is this ability to establish intimacy with other people. Intimacy here means the capacity to commit oneself to concrete affiliations and partnerships and to develop the ethical strength to abide by such commitments

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4. D. Goergen; *The Sexual Celibate*, London, SPCK, 1976, p. 57.

5. E. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle*. New York, Norton, 1980.

even though they call for major sacrifices. This intimacy is possible because we are 'sexual' beings. Sexuality is thus seen here as 'the relational rootedness'<sup>6</sup> of a human being. This intimacy is not the sole product of any biological processes, but the result of the resolve of human will. It is attainable for every man and woman of good will.

Can the celibates establish this 'intimacy' in the absence of the genital sex? If intimacy is a quality of the human mind, not just his biology, it must be admitted that they can. That is why psychologists like Maslow found that in self actualizing people lack of genital sex is not harmful.<sup>7</sup> Lack of genital sex is harmful only when it is the result of environmental forces or psychological or emotional inadequacies, and not when it is the result of a free decision by a person who wants to become fully human by actualizing the ability to establish intimacy with other people. In fact even within the context of marriage genital sex makes sense only if it is aimed at creating more of intimacy, not just for tension reduction. Even procreation to which genital sex is oriented cannot be said to be its sole motive. If procreation was the only purpose of human beings, being male and female, God could have created them as asexual beings - like amoebas. Multiplication of species could have taken place in so many different ways. It is the biblical message of the Yahwist creation account (Gen 2: 4<sup>b</sup> - 25) that God created us as male and female so that we can overcome our existential loneliness through inter-personal relationships: "It is not good that man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18). Procreation, "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28) of the priestly account must be understood as something that should take place within the context of the Yahvist's emphasis on the establishing of intimacy. This makes a lot of sense especially since modern psychology has unravelled the different types of motivations that can prompt genital relations between people. It is not always love for the partner, or even tension

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6. D. Goergen, *The Sexual Celibate*, p. 51.

7. A. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality, Religion, Values, and Peak Experiences*, New York, Harper & Row, 1970, 105-107.

reduction which is behind genital activities among human beings – it can also be need of reassurance, inferiority feelings, desire for revenge, and so on. Both the biblical message and the sound psychological insights support the view that the place for genital sex is within the context of 'love' or intimacy. Only people who strive for this intimacy become fulfilled as human beings through their marital life.

The same can be said about the celibacy. The fact that they abstain from genital relations should in itself be no obstacle to the development of intimacy which is the culmination of the psycho-sexual life of a person. On the other hand this abstaining from genital relation is in itself no guarantee of the achievement of this intimacy either. Whether married or celibate, man realizes himself only by entering into deep and intimate friendship with others. This intimacy, as Erikson points out, leads to commitments to others, not necessarily to emotional intensity or physical closeness.

Through the vow of celibacy, therefore, the religious should try perfect their relational rootedness, which is the meaning of sexuality, and grow more and more in intimacy with others and the Other. Then, and only then can they 'empty' themselves after the example of their Master, for the life of the world.

# Love of God: the Question about its Sufficiency

'A celibate is totally dedicated to God who is infinite in His perfections. As such he is expected to find in God the satisfaction for all his longing for love. A celibate should devote his entire capacity for love solely to God.'

The history of celibate life reveals the fact that many celibates believe that their affective capacity should be reserved for Christ alone and that others are to be given only a spiritual and uncommitted love. They do not deny that the neighbour is to be loved, but they are not willing to extend to him personal friendship which would really mean emotional involvement of self. They deliberately avoid every bit of human love that comes out of mutual personal attraction.

A verticalism which has the right ideas about friendship between celibates is to be respected. Those who have a vocation to this way of life have to be willing to go to great lengths in renunciation and self-denial. There are examples of mystics who were required to renounce every kind of affective relationship with others and to give all their love and affection to God. There are others who have such powerful and effective supports that they do not need heterosexual friendships. There are still others who are too sensitive and so lack the emotional balance for a healthy friendship.

This kind of celibate vocation is a valid but extraordinary type of vocation and cannot be recommended as the ideal way of celibate life. There are many celibate men and women who need human friendships, including the heterosexual kind. For them friendship is an integral part of their consecrated celibacy.

There is a vast difference between the vocation of a celibate and that of the solitary. There definitely is a vocation to solitude, but it is not the vocation of most celibates. The

vocation of the solitary shows a very important feature underlying all genuine Christian calling. Love is the end of the law and so every Christian vocation should include love of the neighbour. The solitary bears the neighbour in his heart. We are the members of the body of Christ. We bear one another's burden. The solitary unites himself with all men in Christ. He cries out to the Father on their behalf. He is not a passive spectator. His dedication to God embraces all men. If at all he runs away from men it is a running away for another form of union, namely, for an undifferentiated union with all humanity.

The genuine solitary has a clear vision of the principle that should be operative in all Christian relationships. Christ is the centre and we are related to one another in Him. We naturally have a responsibility to all and not just to a few, to whom we are related in some way.

### **A. Our love of God, generally insufficient for total fulfilment:**

#### **a. Theoretical reflection**

1) Many celibates think that they need to love only God. This way of thinking goes counter to the teaching of Christ. The Gospels teach that we must love others always and in every way possible. Jesus says: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you".<sup>1</sup> Nowhere in the New Testament do we find the exhortation to love only God. Celibacy is not meant for just loving God but to carry the Lord's love to places where it is most required.

2) The celibate is a human being of flesh and blood. He has emotions and feelings and has various kinds of needs, such as the physical, the psychological and the spiritual. Human beings have physical needs such as hunger and thirst, the need for sleep and the need for certain organic functions to keep them healthy and strong. The human organism will survive only if these physical needs are satisfied.

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1) Jn 15:12

There are psychological needs in man, namely, for affection, security, achievement, independence, status, etc. If these needs are not satisfied there is the risk of tension, frustration and complete disorganization. The need for affection is of supreme importance. We need security from the attacks of an inimical and hostile world. What is meant here is not merely physical security, but the security that love and trust provide. When we are with people who love and care for us, we experience the feeling of security. This security is much more important than the security we may have when we are in a crowd which can provide physical protection. When we have no one to care for and understand us, troubles appear greater and more difficult to overcome. A sense of achievement is also a vital need. Everyone likes to feel that he has done something worthwhile. It is only the sense of security and the knowledge that he is surrounded by love and care that can enable a person to accomplish something worthwhile. A person who feels insecure can never give of his best and achieve what he really is capable of. Even when he does achieve something he feels dissatisfied. The need for status is the desire to be someone in the world, to appear in society as someone who matters. Love is necessary for this also. So we see that all our psychological needs are closely related to the need for human love.

The third category of human needs are spiritual needs. This comprises the need to believe, love and worship the supreme Being who is good and powerful. There is also the need to have a meaning in life. Unless there is a purpose in life, there will be a feeling of anxiety and frustration.

Normally speaking love of God satisfies only the spiritual needs of man. It does not satisfy his psychological and physical needs. Without a miracle love of God cannot, for instance, satisfy our need for food, drink and sleep. God does not expect His love to satisfy man's physical hunger. Even though love of God is superior to physical means such as food or drink, it is God's will that physical needs are to be met by physical means rather than by the love of God. In the same way it is God's will that we satisfy our psychological needs through psychological means rather than through spiritual

means. We do not ask God to satisfy our hunger. Similarly, we should not ask God to satisfy our need for human love. Only food can satisfy our hunger. Similarly only human love can satisfy our need for human love. We would not be honouring God if we were to approach Him every time we felt hungry. Neither would be honouring God if we were to ask Him to satisfy all our psychological needs. According to the plan of God, His love is not meant to fulfill every single need of man.

## **b. Practical Conclusions**

1) If we think that love of God can substitute for the need for human love, we are making things too easy. Even for a celibate the love of God can never be, generally speaking, as natural and emotionally strong as love for another human being. If we try to substitute the love of God for human love, we will be depriving our heart of something vitally necessary. It is only the mystic with special graces who can find complete fulfilment in the love of God. A normal ordinary celibate is bound to feel the loss, if he is deprived of human affection. Many celibates can give of their best and be effective only if their need for human love is met by human friendship. Those who claim that love of God is enough to fulfil all their needs, should also abstain from food, drink and sleep.

2) When a celibate gives up marriage and family life, there is an emptiness in his heart. Love of God can certainly help to endure the loss or emptiness, but as a rule it does not take the place of human love. An integrated personality cannot be evolved out of the right relationship with God only. The girders of a skyscraper, though absolutely necessary for the building, do not constitute the whole building. In the same way, love of God alone cannot make a well developed personality. A perfect work is the outcome of many things. A perfect person, similarly, is the result of the harmonious blending of many factors. If we overlook or neglect some, we shall only ruin the work.

3) A celibate's love of God is his primary fulfilling love. But it is not a complementing love. A celibate woman's love

for Christ, the God man, should never be complementing love in her life. A consecrated woman is usually referred to as "the bride of Christ". But this phrase has to be properly understood. Otherwise an immature person could be misled by it and her relationship to Christ could be not quite healthy and wholesome. While love for Christ should be the most important thing in a celibate woman's life, it may not be considered a complementing love.

4) We cannot sublimate loneliness and expect to find remedy for it in the love of Christ. We cannot gauge the depth and character of Christ's love for us. It is only very slowly and gradually that we come to a personal understanding of the love of Christ.

We cannot overemphasize the fact that human problems can never be solved fully merely by applying a spiritual principle. A spiritual principle is effective only when it is brought right into the human situation, when the problems are understood and worked through on real human level. Failure to understand this in a practical way has caused a great deal of waste of time and energy.

5) A celibate who opens his heart and accepts affection and friendship from a fellow being is not unfaithful to God. It is when we put the love of God on a par with the love of man that all the difficulty arises. A happily married woman may feel tense and unhappy when another strong love comes into her life. This love is the same as her love for her husband, though there may be difference in intensity. The feeling that she could be unfaithful to her husband makes her feel tense. But the love of God essentially lives in the will though it can affect other levels of one's personality. The test of our love for God is in our doing His will, and not in our feeling it or not. It is quite easy to deceive ourselves here. We may feel that by spending long hour on our knees in the Church, or in trying to understand the work of the mystics, we are giving ourselves to God. But this may be just a kind of self-indulgence.

Friendship with others is neither a betrayal of God nor a diminishing of love for Him. There is no reason why we should feel guilty about it. If we appreciate the beauty of nature or admire some great work of art, or enjoy a grand musical composition, we are not betraying God. Nor does it mean that we have taken away something from the love we owe to God.

When God provides friends to a person whose love till then had belonged only to Him, He is providing a greater opportunity to love Him more. God is demanding greater love from him. Our love for nature, for great works of art, music and literature, is only another way of loving and worshipping God. We are only giving back to Him, the gift He has bestowed on us. Friendship is a gift of God, given to lighten the burdens in our journey through life, and to make life more pleasant. As long as a friendship does not become an ultimate end in itself, it may be cultivated in accordance with God's plan.

6) It may seem strange if we state that a secondary relationship can fulfil a primary commitment. In a marriage, a wife's first commitment is to her husband, and a husband's to his wife. At the same time, it is necessary for them to form other relationships if their primary commitment is not to be put under stress. It is not wise or safe for one partner to expect the other to satisfy all his emotional needs. Similarly a celibate whose primary commitment is to God should not expect his love of God to satisfy all his needs. Secondary relationships of human friendship are to be cultivated.

7) When we love anything that is good we are really fulfilling the good pleasure of God. God is happy when He sees us loving our parents, showing gratitude to those who have helped us, and when we care for our friends. These are moral virtues, and noble sentiments. God commands us to practise them.

From the Christian point of view, we can say that interpersonal relationships are one way of revealing the presence and activity of God among men. They also uniquely bring out His immanence and transcendence. Interpersonal relationship

also enable us to understand the paschal mystery better. Human friendships, far from detracting from the love of God, enhance it. For example, a priest who has complementing love will feel greater love for God.

Friendship enables the partners to love God more richly. They can learn of each other's way of approaching God and this will broaden and deepen each one's love for God. The desire of achievement is stronger and greater for man than for a woman. At the same time, in the matter of feelings, it is the woman who feels things more deeply than man. This difference in their psychic constitution will influence their love for God. Complementing love also helps them to understand God's nature better, namely the masculine attributes of strength, justice, consistency and fatherhood and the feminine attributes of tenderness, mercy and motherhood. The love between a man and a woman is a reflection at the creature level of the love of the Triune God.

St. Thomas says: "As created good is a reflection of the uncreated Good, so the attainment of a created good is reflected beatitude".<sup>2</sup> In our daily life in many ways, we experience the attainment of created goods as when a thirsty man drinks water to quench his thirst, or when a seeker of truth gets a new light on something he had not understood till then or when one successfully completes a task that bears fruit. Each experience of happiness reveals a fraction of the ultimate happiness and so, all happiness is related to the eternal beatitude.

In his treatise on divine charity St. Thomas asks whether it is better to love one's friend or one's enemy. He emphatically asserts that while love for the enemy is a clearer proof of our love for God, genuine love for our friends is better: "A friend is both better (than the enemy) and more closely united to us, so that he is a more suitable matter of love, and consequently the act of love that passes over this matter, is better, and there-

fore its opposite is worse, for it is worse to hate a friend than an enemy.....Just as the same fire acts with greater force on what is near than on what is distant, so too. charity loves with greater fervour those who are united to us than those who are far removed; and in this respect the love of friends, considered in itself, is more ardent and better than the love of one's enemy".<sup>3</sup>

8) Genuine love for a person is at the same time love for God. In our friend, we see the being that God has created and also the great love of God who created him and gave him as a gift. The gift and the giver go together. They are not seen apart from each other. Charity does not mean the destruction of some other motives than God for loving others. Charity gives a newer and greater motive for love which only strengthens and perfects all other natural loves. It is a mother's natural instinct to love her child. If she is asked to love it supernaturally, she is not expected to suppress her natural love but only to give the primary importance to her child's divine, eternal destiny and subordinate everything else to it. The same applies to every other human relationship. Natural love, far from being opposed to supernatural love, is the best help towards its growth.

### c. The Meaning of Loving God with an Undivided Heart

1) The term "undivided heart" has to be clearly interpreted and understood. Giving our whole heart to God does not mean that every other love is ousted from the heart. Divine love is rich enough to include in it everything that is good. Divine love recognizes that human affection is positively helpful in seeing and achieving the ultimate Good. When a man gives the first place in his heart to God's love, he is giving his whole heart to God. He must be willing to give up everything and everybody if it is not within the perimeter of God's will for him.

2) Very often the conflict is not because there are too many loves, but because these loves are either in conflict with

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3) *ST II-II*, 27, a. 7

one another or because they are not healthily integrated. It is quite all right to have many loves provided they are all subordinated to the major love, namely, the love for God which should be the centre of all other loves.

3) Christ calls the celibate to renounce everything and surrender himself completely to Him. When he makes this total renunciation, the celibate realizes that in finding Christ he has discovered in Him everything he has given up. Purified and ennobled his affection for other persons is returned to God. Love for God governs his human loves.

4) Even the greatest believer and mystic should not exclude all other love and love only God. Man needs God as well as everything on earth that are divinely ordained for his destiny. God does not need anything outside Himself for His perfection. But human beings, in so far as they are not divine, depend for their perfection both on God and on other creatures. For his very existence the human being needs to have a physical environment. He also needs other human beings, not only for his existence, but also for being fully human and happy. It is not only temporarily that a human being needs the physical world and other people. The Christian idea of the resurrection is of a real glorified physical environment peopled with real glorified persons. Interpersonal presence is an essential part of man's bliss in eternity. Man's happiness both in this world and the next requires the companionship of his fellow beings as well as that of the infinite God.

God knows that we need certain natural helps. When we choose Him, it is His will that we should accept these helps as His gifts to us. This does not mean that God is imperfect and that He cannot satisfy all our needs Himself. It only shows that man is imperfect because he is a finite being. When we choose to be with God, God in His love generally brings with Him human beings for us to love, and find delight in.

5) The idea of detachment is to be grasped correctly. Detachment is a kind of check, to secure the right kind of attachment to the infinite and the finite, to God and all things in God.

A detachment that is right and good is the attitude that gives first place to God and only second and third places to creatures. We should love God first, but not only Him. God knows our needs and therefore will give us also the secondary things we need. Detachment does not mean that we give up everything else except God. It means that we give up everything which is not according to God's will.

A man with children who is truly detached must have a deep love and attachment to God as well as to his children, who are gifts of God. He should be able to give up many things, but ought not to give up his love for his children. Detachment demands that we give up forbidden pleasures or excessive pleasures which, though not morally evil, may hinder our progress towards God. We cannot nor are we expected to give up all delights. It is not possible to live without the pleasure, say, of breathing, sensing, thinking, in fact, of just existing. Detachment from everything except God would imply the non-existence of creation and that we are divine by nature and hence infinite.

6) We are to love God with all our heart and our neighbour as ourselves. But when we love our neighbour only for God, it is considering him a third something without any regard for his person. When our kindness to another is an expression of our love for God, it is a good thing. We could be kind to our domestic pet animals also the same way. But should there not be a difference between the two?

This is not real love for our neighbour. What model of love does Our Lord present to us? Right through the Gospels we see instances of Our Lord's personal interest in His disciples whom He loved for themselves. If His love were detached and extrinsic, they would not have forsaken everything to follow Him nor would they have been broken-hearted when He left them; they would not have thought it a happy privilege to suffer, and die for Him. Our Lord called His disciples His friends. His love for His disciples then and now is a love of friendship. Friendship is not any kind of love; it is not just being kind to anyone. In friendship one is deeply interested in the loved one. One always acknowledges the personality and

individuality of the other. Everything that happens to him or that concerns him is of vital interest to the one who loves him. The lover desires for him everything good that he would desire for himself. It is easy enough to love people as if they were things, loving them only because it will perhaps count in our favour in eternity. But this is not charity.

7) Celibacy is not the only Christian vocation where total, complete love of God is possible and necessary. It is wrong to think that in marriage one's heart is divided and that God automatically gets a smaller share of the love in a married person's heart. This is a false idea which is in vogue because of the false belief that love for God is opposed to the love for man. Love for God and love for man are the same reality. Each grows in proportion to the other. Therefore married love does not divide the heart between God and the spouse. We love our parents and that love does not divide our hearts between them and God.

One does not set God apart from other objects of love. It is only through loving them that one truly loves God. In his first letter John says that the love of God is inseparable from the love of man<sup>4</sup>. There is only one love and that love is shared by God and our neighbour. Christian love of a couple is part of their marriage. Christian married love thus shows an undivided dedication to God. Celibacy also does the same. Celibates, however, have many more lovers in their lives. Celibacy is not the only means of promoting single-hearted, undivided love. But the greatest advantage it has is that it sets the celibate free from the responsibilities and burdens of family life. Celibates can, moreover, comprise more people within the sphere of love than married persons can.

## B. Human love in the life of man

### a. The basic human need for love

1) The deepest need for human being is to love and be loved. When we love, we give ourselves to others;

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4) Jn 3 : 17, 4 : 12, 20-21.

when we are loved we are chosen as the object of affection and interest. By ourselves we cannot express ourselves and attain full development. We wish to become objects of concern, understanding and love. We do not want to be loved for our qualities but for what we are.

2) It is love alone that can provide the security every human being needs, from the turmoils, chances and changes of this life. We feel that there is some tremendously wonderful experience that can lift us from the mundane, dull routine of life, awaiting us. There is a thirst in our heart which only love can quench. It is just this thirst for love and appreciation that is the driving force behind all human endeavours. This craving may be hidden under ambition or behind blunt straightforwardness. Intense activity may conceal it; but still there is no smothering of the drive towards love that is deep down in the human heart. This is the noblest and most profound thing in our nature, because this thirst for human love is an implicit thirst for God.

3) The problem of life is one that concerns love. This becomes clear to all who have really faced life. In every human being there is the basic need for warm, deep and personal relationships. If we observe even the casual passersby on the streets, we will find imprinted on their faces the longing and the desire for love. The drug addict becomes such when he tries to escape the deep loneliness and is unable to get close to others. The innocent eyes of a child also reveal this desire.

Life is an intensely painful affair. The average man leads an unexciting, dull life. It is the same monotonous routine, day after day. For most people, everyday is like every other day with its round of trivialities, common tasks and chores of house work or the unimaginative grind of an office. There seems to be nothing to look forward to.

What really holds life together and changes its dull monotony and boredom are the times spent in exchanging faith and entering into personal relationships with others. When human beings want to find the meaning of life and know

the fullness of life they can do it only through companionship with others. The man who has not experienced friendship and love will not be able to understand the full meaning life.

4) Everybody needs love. No human being can do without it. It is a common error to pose as self sufficient people. We often boast that we can stand on our own feet and that we can be independent of others. We persuade ourselves as well as others that we need no one.

Why do we behave in this way? The reason seems to be that we are vulnerable and are in the grip of diffidence and insecurity. We need sympathy and affection, though we may pretend that we can get on very well in life without the help of others. Otherwise misunderstanding and criticism should not have hurt us. Who is not hurt by these?

We use various ploys and ruses to hide our real lonely selves from others and various false ways by which we cover up our lack of self confidence. A blunt straightforwardness may try to cover up our inner hesitancy. Impatience towards demonstrativeness may be a way of concealing our desire for affection. Retice and indifference are only meant to hide shyness and sensitiveness. Each of us has our own ways of hiding our insecurity.

#### **b. Love as the foundation of human personality**

1) Until recently the commonly held belief was that the human person is something metaphysical. The belief now is that the human person is unique and the reality of his personal existence becomes true only when he enters into interpersonal relationships with others.

According to contemporary philosophy, intersubjectivity is not a mere accident but is a constitutive element of the human person. Interpersonal relationships are so important for the full development of the person that it would not be an exaggeration to express the idea in the maxim: "Aut duo out nemo" (either two or none). When a person lives in another, he is able to live in and for himself. Human existence is the existence of man with man. Man is not an island.

The greatest and most fundamental exigency of the human being is to be with. Ultimately this exigency is the same as the desire to be. For a human being the desire to be and the desire to be with are the same because the essential human *esse* is *co-esse*. To be human is to be with.

Intimacy is not merely a social or psychological factor in human life. It is a real metaphysical dimension of human life. It is something that has sunk its roots deep into our humanness. As intimacy gains in depth, the heights and depths of human nature which were hitherto unaware of, will be revealed

2) When we use the personal pronoun "I", it shows that we are responding to someone who makes us a subject. When a child realizes that his parents want him and accept him, he discovers himself as a subject. This self-discovery is almost like seeing oneself in the mirror for the first time.

3) Contemporary philosophers agree with the psychotherapists that self-alienation is correlated to absence of companionship, mutual understanding and love. Martin Buber says that a self has to assert itself in relation to a thing or a person - either to "it" or to "you". If the relationship is to an "it", whether it be a thing or a person considered a thing, the self also sinks to the level of "it", and there is no scope for the self to develop itself fully. Reversely, when the self is related to "you", it experiences itself in the "you".<sup>5</sup>

Gabriel Marcel's opinion is similar. He says that if the other is considered a "third party", I am a "third party" to myself. On the other hand, if the other is a second person and is intimately with me, I am intimately with myself.<sup>6</sup> Self-presence is vitally linked with presence to others.

According to Paul Ricoeur, it is only in mutual recognition that the self comes into its own. That means, it is through the self-creative, self-giving act that self-recognition comes. The knowledge that someone values us changes our impersonal

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5) *I and Thou*, New York, 19 1958, pp. 4 16.

6) *Creative Fidelity*, New York, 1964, pp. 33-34.

consciousness into self-consciousness. Mutual esteem is both affective and affecting. There is no cold-blooded calculating of the worth of the other but a genuine warm feeling of regard and esteem and affection. That is why the person who is the object of this warm feeling of appreciation is himself affected to the extent that he begins to feel towards himself what the other feels towards him. He begins to appreciate himself as a self. He realizes his existence value.<sup>7</sup>

### c. Love as the Prerequisite for Human Fulfilment

1) When a person becomes aware of his value as a person and when he realizes that his life is worthwhile, there is a feeling of personal fulfilment. This feeling of satisfaction is an enriching experience. The experience of personal fulfilment is proportionate to his assessment of his personal capacity and adequacy. Anyone who is seeking fulfilment is first of all seeking personal adequacy. His yearning for personal fulfilment is a yearning of his whole person. He longs to be psychologically complete. The desire to grow in personal adequacy is inherent in every one and is a natural, spontaneous desire.

2) Though there is no one who does not desire personal fulfilment, there can be and is confusion about the nature of this fulfilment. Some seek fulfilment in the intensity, quantity and novelty of sexual experiences or through some other pleasures. Some expect to find fulfilment in dedicated service to the poor, some others in drugs and narcotics. Others consider wealth to be the symbol of success and pursue it hoping to find happiness in it.

There are still others who believe that they achieve fulfilment in creativity and achievements. But they realize that these also give pleasure only for the time being. They continue to feel frustrated. A person who has some literary ability may plan to write a masterpiece, but it gives him no permanent satisfaction. These accomplishments are broken cisterns which

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7) *Finitude et culpabilité: L'homme fallible*, Paris 1960, pp. 136-140.

hold the water of pleasure and fulfilment for a little while and then gradually become empty. This is true of teachers, nurses, mechanics, painters, musicians and others, however rewarding their achievements may be.

There are others who feel convinced that social prominence, business advancement and other status symbols provide personal fulfilment. They rush about madly in pursuit of them. In the course of their frantic activities they come into contact with many people. They feel that these contacts are very important and would help them to achieve what they want. But they remain frustrated. Some spend all their time and energy in acquiring academic degrees but in this too there is no permanent satisfaction.

Personal adequacy is the source of personal fulfilment and that is the result of warm interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relationships make one realize that one loves and is loved by people who matter in one's life. A person who from infancy has been surrounded by genuine love will be able to develop himself as a person. He has the basic adequacy that is necessary for personal fulfilment. One who has not been loved is empty and as such has no love even for himself.

Love guides people and motivates their actions. Love alone gives meaning and significance to their lives. When we say that a man is happy, we are not referring to the perfection he has attained in arriving at rational truth or to his wealth or position. We are referring to his attainment of authentic divine and human love.

Hitherto, in speaking of personal fulfilment, nothing explicit has been said about the love of God. Divine love and human love cannot be set against each other. One who does not feel and experience the human love that comes into his life, cannot understand God's love. We cannot sacrifice one to achieve the other. When a person recognizes his responsibility to the person he loves and fulfills it, he begins to understand God who is love.

3) The secular sciences also support the idea that only through intimate relationships can there be full human development. According to contemporary psychology, the knowledge that we are held in esteem and affection will go a long way towards maintaining emotional health. Sociology points out that life in our mass society increases the sense of loneliness. In favour of mental health people are asked to overcome the separatedness that exists in the present-day world and to draw closer to each other in love. Contemporary philosophy affirms that only in and through the being together of persons in a "We" can self-becoming and self-fulfilment be possible.

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